The Relevance of Shame in Dog-Human Relationships

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Simple summary: Research indicate that psychiatric service dogs have become increasingly common throughout the Western world. Numerous anecdotal accounts as well as scientific research indicate that a life with a psychiatric service dog has helped war veterans suffering from PTSD. However, the structure of the relationship between psychiatric service dogs and humans with mental health issues has yet to receive more than limited attention. Shame, as an emotion is closely connected to psychiatric disabilities such as PTSD, and may be of relevance in the structure of such a relationship. In this paper we show how a philosophical analysis can shed light on levels of dog-human relationship currently passed by in much research.

Abstract: The general claim behind the use of psychiatric service dogs is that the dogs, given their individual training, can provide a bigger sense of independency and safety for people struggling with mental health issues such as PTSD. Struggling with these types of mental health issues is thought to be associated with a self-undermining feeling of shame that, in turn, reinforces the mental health issue in question. This particular experience is, we believe, not present, or present in only a limited sense, in a positive emotional relationship with a dog. Thus, understanding the phenomenon of shame and its influence on the dog-human relationship may help us understand why such a relationship can be beneficiary to people struggling with PTSD and possibly a variety of other mental health issues. The concept of shame is most suitably thought of as a social and relational phenomenon. That is, as an emotion elicited by others and related to certain societal and cultural standards, ideals and norms. Shame is experienced as a painful emotion that negatively affects our self-perception and includes the risk of producing a self-undermining shame that can lead to social withdrawal and a continuous vicious circle of shame. In this article we address these psychological phenomena from within a philosophical framework, and we argue that a positive relationship between a dog and a human can provide a valuable social space in which shame becomes less present. Such a social space necessitates the presence of a connection between relational beings – i.e. beings with advanced mental and emotional

capacities. Thus, we argue that the understanding of any dog-human relationship must include an approach beyond the somewhat still existing confines of objective natural science and its implied skepticism and agnosticism towards animal mind. We introduce an approach to dog life and dog-human relationships inspired by phenomenology. This approach enables an understanding of the dog as a bodily being, who lives in and experiences the world around her in co-existence with relevant similar others, including humans. We argue that such an approach is a sound way of trying to understand dog-human relationships and provides a key to a better understanding of the concept of shame in connection with such relationships.

Keywords: Psychiatric service dogs; shame; philosophical analysis investigation; dog-human relationship; dog-human interaction

Introduction

Co-existing for thousands of years, humans and dogs have been part of each other's lives - different species but nonetheless intertwined as bodies and beings (Haraway 2008). For some it is a peripheral co-existence, for others an intimate co-existence as seen in the relationship between a service dog and a human. Service dogs are an increasingly common phenomenon and today such dogs are not only associated with tasks related to people with physical disabilities, but also in relation to people with mental health issues such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (See for instance Tedeschi, Fine et al. 2010, Taylor et al. 2013, Kloep, Hunter et al. 2017, O'Haire & Rodriguez 2018, Glintborg & Hansen 2017). According to Tedeschi, Fine et al. (2010), psychiatric service dogs are trained to perform tasks that help mitigate the mental health issues of their human partners with whom they live. The issues in question can be PTSD, anxiety, depression or other inhibiting issues. Several organizations in the US, Europe and Australia provide psychiatric service dog training and certification which indicates that such dogs are, if not common, then at least present in several societies (see for example servicedogcentral.org, psychdogpartners.org, servicedogs.uk, minddog.org.au, trinitas-st.dk).

The organizations mainly focus on the individually trained tasks that the dogs can perform in order to help their handler/owner in daily life. Much research concerning these relationships are empirical research focusing on therapy dogs – i.e. dogs that are being therapeutically employed in connection with humans that are not their handler/owner – and on service dogs for the physically disabled such a people in wheelchairs or vision impairment. In comparison, very little research seems to have been directed at investigating the relationship between psychiatric service dogs and their human partners. There are plenty of anecdotal reports as well as a few studies on how sharing a life with a psychiatric service dog has helped/is helping war veterans cope with their post-war lives suffering from PTSD (Tedeschi, Fine et al. 2010, Taylor, Edwards et al. 2013, Kloep, Hunter et al. 2017, O'Haire & Rodriguez 2018, Krause-Parello & Morales 2018). There are studies showing how interacting with dogs can be of great benefit to humans in general (Hart 1995, Scheibeck, Pallauf et al. 2011) and other research that indicates how those living with mental health problems benefit from living with companion animals or pets – dogs included (Brooks, Rushton et al. 2016, Brooks, Rushton et al. 2018). However, several questions about the dog-human relationship remain unanswered, not least within the area of service and therapy dogs and some researchers request extensive empirical evidence to answer these questions (for instance Brooks et al. 2018 and Krause-Parello & Morales 2018). This is, however, not the aim of this paper. Instead, we will present a new philosophical perspective on the relationship between people with PTSD and their psychiatric service dogs[1] by taking shame as a phenomenon into account – a phenomenon, which is thought to play a crucial role in a number of human mental health issues (Würmser 1981, Ojserkis, McKay et al. 2014, La Bash & Papa 2014, Taylor 2015) as well as in human morality (Deonna, Rodogno et al. 2011, Loegstrup 1995, Calhoun 2004). Our work starts out with the presupposition that a relationship with a dog is to some extent equivalent to a social interrelation, which in its very structure, is free of negative – or self-undermining – shame. This is not saying that shame is lacking per se in the relationship but that such a relationship is of a qualitative different kind than that between human beings. We will show this difference

[1] Even though shame is connected to several mental health issues, we have, due to the complexities of mental health issues, chosen to focus solely on people with PTSD in this article.

through a philosophical study of shame as a phenomenon. It is, however, also our preliminary claim that such an investigation will show how shame is of great importance regarding the moral aspect of dog-human interrelations. No similar philosophical study has been conducted on this topic before.

In order to fulfill our aim, we will need to address shame as a phenomenon. There is extensive literature on shame within both philosophy and other academic areas such as psychoanalysis, psychology and sociology. Our main inspiration when addressing this particular phenomenon comes from the phenomenological tradition, including the famous keyhole example from Sartre, as well as other more recent studies on shame. In addition, we will take into account empirical studies as well as work from within psychoanalytical practice, which will mainly focus on the connection between shame and PTSD.

Besides shame as a phenomenon, we will address the animal/dog-human relationship, which is widely discussed within a variety of academic and non-academic literature. Regarding this topic, we are also mainly inspired by a phenomenological stance. Traditionally and historically, phenomenologists have taken other animals to be outside the scope of their philosophical studies. We, however, embrace the recent break with this tradition and work with phenomenology as an approach that can meaningfully view both other animals and humans as bodily beings related to one another in specific differences. This will be our fundamental point of departure in this article.

Lastly and before we reach a conclusion we will present a discussion on shame in the relationship between dogs and humans with continuous attention to the specific relationship between people with PTSD and their dogs.

This article ought to be seen as a preliminary investigation into a new topic, which requires further research. Our hope is to create a basis for precisely that.

Shame – a two sided phenomenon

The word shame can be traced back to the Indo-European root kam/kem, which refers to concealing, hiding and covering up (Würmser 1981, Karlsson & Sjöberg 2009) but when confronting shame as a phenomenon it is not at all that easy to give a clear-cut description or definition. This may be partly due to shame being closely related to a set of other phenomena or emotions, such as guilt and embarrassment. It is most likely also due to the ongoing debate on whether shame is a heteronomous or an autonomous phenomenon. Said in another way, whether shame is a phenomenon that only occur in the social or intersubjective sphere of life or a phenomenon also relevant for our autonomous moral actions and commitments (Williams 1993, Deonna, Rodogno et al. 2011) or for our moral maturity as argued by Calhoun (2004). The aim of this paper is not to reach such a clear-cut definition or to discuss shame as a phenomenon in depth from a particular perspective. Rather, in order to be able to show the relevance of shame in the relationship of our interest, we will present an overview of slightly different, yet coherent accounts of shame. We will give an account of shame as a social phenomenon different from, yet similar to the aforementioned interrelated emotions guilt and embarrassment, as an unpleasant self-undermining emotion (negative shame) but also as a morally relevant phenomenon (positive shame), which we should not seek to avoid altogether. Since we have chosen to focus on a particular group of people, namely those diagnosed with PTSD, we will refer to empirical research concerning PTSD and shame when relevant throughout this overview of shame.

Shame – a social phenomenon

Being shamed by others and feeling ashamed of oneself is a well-known and very negative experience that most people try their best to avoid. A pounding heart, sweaty palms, blushing, feeling small, looking away and wanting to hide or wishing to completely disappear are all reactions and feelings that are part of this extremely unpleasant emotion (Würmser 1981, Williams 1993, Fuchs 2003, Maibom 2010, Zahavi 2015). Shame

is closely connected to other people and their opinions of us, as well as with certain societal and cultural ideals and norms that all of us are subject to in one way or another (Würmser 1981, Nussbaum 2004, Maibom 2010). Hence, there may be differences in the expectations that are placed on people in different cultures and thereby differences in what an individual may be ashamed of for not living up to (Würmser 1981, Maibom 2010). Thus, there will also be differences in what one, conventionally seen, ought to be ashamed of. According to Maibom standards, norms and ideals are established by authorities that are accepted by others as such (2010, 569). Parents, trendsetters and religious leaders are apparent examples of such authorities who intentionally or unintentionally put forth certain ideals for others to live up to. By internalizing certain standards and ideals a certain element of responsibility becomes clear. We take on at least some responsibility for living up to those certain ideals. Such ideals often overlap different cultures but may also be of great varieties. However, despite the variety of what one might be ashamed of, shame is by definition a social phenomenon, which is closely connected to disclosure and rejection (Sartre 2002, Fuchs 2003, Zahavi 2015), of being ignored (Mollon 2002, 1-21) and of others displaying disgust or contempt (Wurmser 1981, Mollon 2002, Maibom 2010). This is not equivalent to saying that shame cannot occur without the other's physical presence or that we cannot pass judgements on ourselves (which we will return to in Shame and Morality). There would not be any shame were it not for the fact that we are always situated in the world in continuous interaction with others. Sartre's 'keyhole-example' is often used to illustrate the triggering of shame and the importance of the other and the other's gaze in the understanding of this particular phenomenon:

"Let us imagine that moved by jealousy, curiosity, or vice I have just glued my ear to the door and looked through a keyhole. I am alone and on the level of a non-thetic self-consciousness. […] My consciousness sticks to my acts, it *is* my acts" (Sartre 2002, 259).

Being in this state of mind – on the level of a non- or pre-reflective self-consciousness – our consciousness is glued to our actions; we are living our actions and are completely in our own subjectivity. This unreflective

consciousness, together with our subjectivity, is only disturbed by our sudden awareness that we may not be alone. A sudden sound can bring about an awareness of the possibility of another person's presence and that person's gaze upon us. We may not find anybody there in the physical room with us but we are nonetheless suddenly aware of our exposed presence in the room – struck by our own being, agonizingly attentive of our actions. We then see ourselves as the other sees us and realize that we are bodily present in the world, objects for the other, vulnerable to others and their judgment upon us. Shame occurs in the pre-reflective state of mind and when it hits us it runs through us from head to toe with a shivering suddenness (Sartre 2002, 222), and leads to the realization, or the recognition, that we are that being, that object, which the other person sees. Not a being we wish to be, but a being that we nonetheless are. A being, who is constituted in that we are in the world together with others who do pass judgments upon us and with whom we engage in struggles and fights for our own subjectivity. Shame, as Sartre states, brings us a realization of an intimate relation of ourselves to ourselves. Shame falls back on our self-perception and the other person thus acts as a mediator in our relation to ourselves (Sartre 2002, Zahavi 2015). Hence, shame is both pre-reflective and reflective in its structure. When being exposed by the other, we are struck by the pre-reflective shame but judging ourselves demands a reflection of ourselves.

Herein we see three important aspects of shame, namely that shame falls back on our self-perception, that there is an admittance in shame of being who we are, and that shame is a profoundly social phenomenon, related to our being in the world with others. It is important to emphasize that Sartre points to the fact that there need not be an actual other present when shame overwhelms us. A sound that represents the possibility of an others presence is enough. Thus, the other can be physically present or just be an imagined other.

Before moving on to the next section, we will tie a few comments on the aforementioned related emotions, guilt and embarrassment, which may sometimes be used interchangeably with shame. Even an unfulfilling distinction between some of the closest related emotional phenomena will likely prove to be of great value in

the discussion on shame in the dog-human relationship and why this particular phenomenon may help us understand the specific dog-human relationship chosen for this study.

Interrelated phenomena

Starting with guilt, the most important and most commonly described difference seems to be the direction of the two emotions. Where shame is directed towards and clings to the entire self, guilt is directed to and clings to certain actions or deeds (Tangney, Miller et al. 1996, Fuchs 2003, Karlsson & Sjöberg 2009) and to the victims of our voluntary or involuntary wrongdoings (Williams 1993, 93-94). Thus, guilt refers to something wrong that I have done to somebody else – to doing - and shame refers to myself – to being (Karlsson & Sjøberg 2009). Shame points primarily towards hiding oneself and guilt points primarily towards repairing and undoing the deed. Even though shame and guilt according to the above differs they are common in that they are both highly unpleasant emotions and they both have possible immensely negative consequences on one's life and they can both be linked to the same experience. The case study by Dettmer, Kappes et al. (2015) is an example of this. It portrays a young former deployed soldier who reports feeling immense guilt for having taken a young boys life in a fire exchange during war in Iraq. In the aftermath he also feels deeply ashamed of the excitement he felt during the fire exchange. Thus, he feels guilty about a certain action, one that he may not have been able to avoid given the circumstances, and he feels shame for the way he was and felt during the engagement.

Embarrassment as the second related emotion has sometimes been understood as a variety of shame and as having a somewhat lighter influence on us. Even though embarrassment is a rather unpleasant social emotion directed at the self it seems more related to situations in which we experience ourselves being foolish or awkward and for which we feel less responsible than is the case with both shame and guilt (Tangney, Miller et al. 1996). Being embarrassed involves being evaluated by others, but contrary to being ashamed such

evaluations are considered less serious and embarrassment seems to be elicited in situations that are somewhat amusing (Ibid.). Thus, embarrassment is connected to situations that can constitute a funny story afterwards (Zahavi 2015, 210). Another important difference is that embarrassment is not something that we feel when alone – it always occurs in the company of others – whereas shame clings to our very selves even though no others are physically there to pass judgment upon us (Ibid., Tangney, Miller et al. 1996). Shame is also felt in the reflective state of mind even when we are alone. Embarrassment is unpleasantly felt in a concrete situation but does not leave us with a negatively altered self-perception[2].

With these short yet valuable comments on some common distinctions we will now take a look at the profound negative side of shame, which will emphasize the importance of shame for people with different mental health issues including PTSD.

Self-undermining shame – the negative side of phenomenon

Given the dreadfulness of experiencing shame and the way it falls back on our self-understanding in a negative way always involving the other – physically present or not – it is easy to consider shame a negative phenomenon. According to Wurmser (1981) shame is bisected, meaning is has a bad/negative and a good/positive side. The positive side of shame is the morally relevant aspect, which we will present in the section 'Shame and Morality.' The negative side of shame is shame so entrenched in us, that it becomes self-undermining and self-destructive. In the following we will present thoughts on the negative side of shame – in continuation of the previous section.

[2] Taking the keyhole-example used by Sartre into consideration it is possible to discuss whether or not being caught spying on others through a keyhole elicits shame, guilt or merely embarrassment, that is, if that particular example is adequate. However, that discussion lies outside of the aim of this paper and we will leave that question open for further discussion.

Shame is deeply connected to feelings of inadequacies (for instance of not being able to live up to certain accepted ideals), low self-worth and low self-value, to weaknesses and that which is considered abnormal (Wurmser 1981, Mollon 2002, Nussbaum 2006). Such inadequacies, weaknesses and abnormalities can be manifold and are measured against societal and cultural convictions of ideals and standards as well as against that which is considered normal. According to Swiss psychoanalyst Leon Wurmser (1981) shame is often the underlying cause of negative emotional states such as depression, anxiety and anger. When shame gets an immense hold of us it leads to loss of self-value and self-worth, feelings of inadequacies and helplessness and thus undermines our very selves (Ibid.). Such powerful self-undermining shame may originate in several different affairs. As stated above, there is a certain cultural aspect of shame in the inability to live up to certain ideals and then there is the shame brought on by traumatic events in our lives (Wurmser 1981, Maibom 2010, Taylor 2015, Carmassi, Bertelloni et al. 2017, Mollon 2002). These are events that we may be an innocent part of (like childhood trauma, war trauma, accidents etc.), but which, nonetheless, can elicit a self-destructive life-controlling shame (Ibid.). When shame is that strong it becomes an integrative part of our identity and we develop an immensely negative self-perception, which in turn results in other emotional states such as those mentioned before. These other emotional states function as screen affects to cover up the shame (Wurmser 1981). Being this deeply ashamed results in social withdrawal – either psychically, mentally or both – and despite the undermining of the self it causes a certain self-centeredness related to wanting to hide from others (Ibid.). We become so caught up in our negative thoughts of ourselves that it is difficult not to think that other people have the same negative thoughts of us. Thus, it makes us fear that other people disclose our true being and we put up a front – or a mask – in order to hide ourselves. In comparison Ehterington (2003) argues that exposure to trauma often result in what she calls bodily reactions, such as illness, compulsion, addiction and pain. Reactions that suppresses trauma-related emotions such as fear and anger. None of these reactions – putting up a mask or suppressing fear and anger are acts of consciousness, meaning that it is not happening by choice. Adding to this, recent research shows that co-morbidities such as depression, anger and violence, substance abuse and isolation have also been found to correlate strongly with PTSD (Taylor 2015, see also

Krause-Parello & Morales 2018). Shame adds to the negative impact and have also been found to play an important role for those struggling with PTSD and co-morbidities as well (Ibid., La Bash & Papa 2014, Ojserkis, McKay et al. 2014). Whichever way we look at it shame does seems to play an extremely important role in many mental health issues, including PTSD. Not only is self-undermining shame inhibiting in itself but being ashamed of oneself potentially leads to even more shame in that the mere addressing of the shame elicits further shame (Wurmser 1981, Mollon 2002, Taylor 2015). It is too shameful to talk about the shame we feel and we might end up withdrawing more and more from those close social relations to other people that are of uttermost importance for our existence. We are too ashamed of ourselves and the fear of being exposed by others causes us to withdraw from social contexts.

Regardless of the many and important aspects of shame as a self-undermining emotional state, we also need to address shame's relevance for morality. This is a perspective of shame that is considered to be of a positive character.

Shame and morality – the positive side of the phenomenon

There is no doubt that shame has mostly strong negative connotations, being an extremely unpleasant emotion. Even so, shame is a basic condition of human life. It is an emotion closely connected to social norms (as mentioned earlier), to the self and to moral values (Wurmser 1981, Williams 1993, Maibom 2010, Deonna et al. 2011). No matter how painful shame feels to the individual human being, it is not of pure negative character. A positive side to shame is revealed when we take a closer look at the phenomenon. This positive side of shame is what we call the moral shame. Moral shame is to be understood as a sense of shame, i.e. the ability to feel shame at all. Contrary to the self-undermining shame, moral shame is closely connected to our own individual values (that we of course always share with at least some others) and our ability to make autonomous judgements. Some, such as Calhoun (2004), argue that it is a mark of moral maturity when we feel shame for not living up to the ideals of respected others even when we do not agree with those certain

ideals. However, we agree with Zahavi that shame at least to some extent involves an acceptance or an admission of the evaluation of the other (2015, 225-228). Others may think that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for not living up to certain ideals but if we do not believe that such a judgement reveals any truth about ourselves is seems most unlikely that such a judgement would elicit any shame in us. Following this, others do not solely elicit shame, but by ourselves as well, when we find ourselves acting in disagreement with our own values. Thus, such a sense of shame can be an aversive, yet helpful, emotion when navigating the social sphere of life. A sphere in which we, as moral creatures, have at least some responsibility to others and the world around us. When meeting the other we face a silent ethical demand to respect that other's individuality and will, not to impose harm on that other (Loegstrup 1997, 26-28). However insignificant it may seem in meeting the other, we do hold a part of that other's life in our hands. We may not be aware of this in all of our life's doings, but the ethical demand remains an unspoken part of human life (Ibid, 20-22), founded on the tacit trust that we have in others. A trust in which we surrender a part of ourselves and leaves us vulnerable in the hands of the other. This makes us, as adult human beings, both vulnerable and responsible at the same time, Other individuals, such as children, do not bear responsibility or hold a part of the others' life in their hands. The ethical demand is one-sided. We cannot demand reciprocity, which is very obvious to most when taking children into account. But also non-human animals can be taken into account (Gjerris 2005). Even though Loegstrup in his own writings refers only to interpersonal human relationships, it is entirely possible to meaningfully view non-human animals in the light of the ethical demand (Ibid.). Following Gjerris this is true when looking at two central points of Loegstrup's ethics, which are vulnerability and the fact that the ethical demand is one-sided. In meeting a non-human animal, we, as responsible adult human beings, are holding at least a part of that animals' life in our hands. The animal is vulnerable to our ability to impose harm upon him. At the time we cannot demand reciprocity from the animal who is, in this instance, comparable to the child. From the vulnerability of non-human living beings grows the ethical demand. It is a demand to care for them in their vulnerability when one is holding a part of their lives in our hands. To Loegstrup both humans and animals alike are what he calls living beings/natural beings – both "emplaced in the cycle of

nature" (Loegstrup 1995, 42). Humans, however, are furthermore conscious beings with the ability – indeed tendency – to shamelessly destroy our surroundings when we forget that our higher level of consciousness does not appoint us rulers of all other life. To Loegstrup consciousness is not only a matter of intelligence. It is a matter of shame, as well. Shame is an important acquirement born from the fact that there are things, phenomena and beings that do not belong to us. Shame is what helps us draw a line between what is morally acceptable and what is not. In this sense, shame can be viewed as a truly positive phenomenon, which is of great importance to humans when navigating throughout the social and moral sphere of life (Williams 1993, Maibom 2010, Deonna et al. 2012).

Keeping the above presentation of shame as both an unpleasant social and morally valuable phenomenon as well as a possibly painful self-undermining emotion in mind, we will move on to presenting a view of other animals in related otherness and dogs as a potential significant other. This next section will help create the basis for our final discussion on the existence and relevance of shame in the relationship between dogs and humans with PTSD (and possibly other mental health issues).

Related otherness and the dog-other

Humans and other animals have always co-existed. We all inhabit the same planet, share places of living – known or unknown to one another. Some in close relationships that have been and still are fascinating to many. There is no doubt that dogs have a special status for many people. This is obvious just considering how many people who have actively chosen to live with one or more dogs, that many people consider their dogs to be family members (Power 2008). Also how many dog-training courses one can find just by a quick search on the internet and how much dog-cognition research that is now being conducted (see for instance Coppinger & Coppinger 2001, Wynne & Udell 2013, Horowitz 2014, Berns 2013). Many people regard dogs as being of great advantage for human health and just looking through social media debates and news media as well it

becomes apparent that dogs do in fact play a huge role in the minds of many. There are different approaches to investigate the dog-human relationships and we will in the following section present some limits of natural science before following up with a different approach inspired by continental philosophy and in particular phenomenology.

When addressing the questions about psychiatric service dog-human relationships the focus remains mainly on the possible positive effects on the humans involved (see for instance Tedechi et al. 2010, Taylor et al. 2013, Krause-Parello & Morales 2018, O'Haire & Rodiguez 2018, Brooks et al. 2018). Though such investigations certainly give us valuable knowledge it is, however, lacking when it comes to understanding the very structure of the interrelationship between the two species. To better explain and understand the effects on humans sharing their lives with psychiatric service dogs and to have a fuller picture of what such an encounter between species actually is, we must also focus on what the lived dog life is and how a concept of dog mind and inner life can be understandable in the scientific contexts in which we investigate the dog-human relationship. In much of the literature concerning dog-human relationships the mind, or at least a certain extent of mind, of the dog is taken as a given. It is taken to be axiomatic that dogs are indeed a kind of being which has the qualitative mental aspects such as consciousness, thoughts and emotions. Such phenomena, however, are not of such a type that they can be objectively accessed and inspected via the traditional means of modern natural science. Natural science can include observations of physical objects in space and time. That is, it can observe and describe such things as bodies and brains. This makes us capable of discerning certain types of behavior, body functions and brain activity and sometimes making qualified speculations about the connections between these things. However, the qualitative aspects of being an animal with a mind elude the traditional methods of natural science. From early enlightenments thinkers such as René Descartes (1596-1650) who compared animal behavior and movements to those of machines or "automata" (1912, 44) to contemporary biological psychologists like Bob Bermond (2003) there is a vein of rejection of animal consciousness in parts of natural science.. Another modern animal mind sceptic is Oxford biologist Marian Stamp Dawkins.

Although, and in contrast to Descartes and Bermond, she does not claim to disprove animal consciousness, she argues that much of current biology and ethology too easily take the notion of animal consciousness for granted. It is highly problematic, she states, when we "are asked to believe that the 'explanatory gap' between the physiology and behaviour we can observe and the subjective experience we cannot is not more than a small ditch that we can hop across" (2012, 47). On the question of the existence of animal consciousness Dawkins ascribes to an agnostic position; "[m]ilitantly agnostic if necessary" (Ibid, 177). By such agnosticism she means to indicate that she believes that it is indeed a possibility that many animals, perhaps even more animals than we are currently considering, are endowed with types of experiential consciousness. However, this is, she argues, not a matter which it is possible to address via natural science and we ought to be very careful of "claiming as scientific fact things that cannot be studied by science" (Ibid, 48). Dawkins argues that the only consciousness that we could adequately say anything about is our own human consciousness (Ibid, 90). We know that we have consciousness because we have the direct experience of it through introspection. We do, on the other hand, not have this privilege with the minds of animals and since their brains, from which any consciousness must arise, are so different from ours that we cannot say anything scientifically about them. We agree with Dawkins that there is a very significant problem of access to other minds. However, we disagree that such a limited type of natural science is the only way of *knowing about* animal consciousness in a relevant way. Albeit differences exist between species, similarities in existence are present and even though we can learn valuable lessons from scientific discoveries about consciousness, we do believe that a phenomenologically inspired approach to both animals as well as human-animal relationships can provide us with just as valuable insights.

We all exist as bodily subjects perceiving the world in which we live (Uexküll 1934, Acampora 2006, Lestel et al. 2014), related in specific differences or otherness. Related otherness is, among other things, to realize that not only humans are immersed in the surrounding world as bodily beings (Acampora 2006, 5, 27). Similarly, most animals, and certainly animals such as dogs, are also always already immersed in the world. This is not

to say that we are all immersed in the world in exactly the same way. Rather, we ought to see ourselves and other animals as beings-in-*a*-world (Ibid, 12). That is, we are bodily beings existing not in *the* world but in worlds of life that differ slightly but still overlap. To gain knowledge about the versatile life-modes of different animals, we have to be able to enter environments that are not solely human (Uexküll 1934, Acampora 2006). This is possible through our bodily overlapping existences that we share with not only other humans but with other animals as well. One of our faults as humans interested in understanding animals and human-animal relationships is the tendency to start out with as much distance and skepticism towards our area of enquiry as possible. This is the conviction that such a reduction or attempt at objectification should be the fundamental basis of knowledge creation. Acampora, however, dismisses this idea not only as objectionable in its value and efficacy but as highly problematic in relation to how enquiries of these types actually function. We are, as Acampora writes, "always already caught up in the experience of being a live body thoroughly involved in a plethora of ecological and social interrelationships with other living beings and people. That, we hold, is our native position, and it deserves – existentially, phenomenologically, and indeed scientifically – to be recognized as such and consequently to be taken as our philosophical starting point" (Ibid, 5). In order to not give in to the more positivistic aspects of natural science and end up in a Dawkinsian skepticism we must use our experiences of actively being with other beings as the platform from which we endeavor to "gain ontological access" (Ibid, 12) to the rather different life-worlds of animals.

The ideas of such ontological access is similarly found in a number of very different writers. Both Donna Haraway (2008, 2014) and Bernard E. Rollin (1992), for example, argue that any fundamental understanding of animals must be gained through the recognition of shared world and of sharing world (Harfeld 2011, 2016). Although advancing from quite dissimilar theoretical starting points, both Haraway's and Rollin's work focuses on this break with traditional categorical boundaries between human and animal lives. Instead, they argue, we ought to see ourselves as connected with the other animals in types of togetherness that are not merely biological aspects of shared genetics or similar natural science facts. We are always in a state of

becoming with many (Haraway 2008, 4), never preexisting our relations (Haraway 2014, 36). This is co-existence in a both self- and other-defining sense and we are reminded of it through what Rollin, inspired by Acampora, calls a "primordial experience of commonality" (Rollin 2007). Rollin is first and foremost known as an animal ethicist and indeed as one of the founding members of animal ethics as a modern academic philosophical endeavor together with such people as Peter Singer and Tom Regan. He has been and continue to be an exponent of what he calls a common sense ethics based on the notion of animal telos (Rollin 2017). For the purpose of this article though, it is more important to understand the epistemological underpinnings of Rollin's ethical approach. Rollin argues for what he sees as an ethically necessary awakening or maintenance of our "moral awareness" (1992, 78) through a *gestalt shift* in our relationship with animals. This epistemological shift is not a rejection of the animal perceptions of for example natural science. It is, however, a move towards additional perspectives. This move is achieved through three steps: Acceptance of fundamental anthropomorphism and an evolvement from "sympathetic observations" to "empathetic understandings" of animals (Rollin 1992, 92-94). Anthropomorphism is in this case to be understood as an a priori acceptance of the animals as one that, although not human, has in many relevant aspects the human forms that we know from ourselves such as types of consciousness and self-awareness. One can, by adopting this approach, then meet animals with a generous or sympathetic epistemological attitude when observing them and engaging in relations with them. This then creates the epistemological foundation for any ethics: Empathetic understanding and by this a psychological willingness to identify with animals in a way that, although not including animals in the human sphere, includes them in an ethically relevant 'us'.

In the perspective of becoming with related others whom we are able to reach an understanding of despite our differences one relevant question remains to be answered in light of the topic of this article. That is the question of whether a dog is such a related other before whom we can feel shame of ourselves. This question will be our main focus in the next section that will

Discussion – shame in the relationship between humans and their dogs

Dogs are highly social beings living in close proximity to humans all over the world. They are an adaptive species great at communicating with others (Hart 1995, Scott & Fuller 1998, Coppinger & Coppinger 2001, Wynne & Udell 2013). As related others, dogs and humans are able to form very close bonds; even to the extent where dogs are perceived as significant others (Haraway 2014: 37). To people suffering from PTSD their service dogs can provide such things as a sense of security, a mediator in relation to other people and the world outside. They can be something to live for, something to care for and love, as well as a being a fix point for the feeling of being loved unconditionally (Taylor, Edwards et al. 2013, Krause-Parello & Morales 2018). There is no doubt that to many people their dogs play an important role in their lives. This is the role of being an other with whom they have formed a close reciprocal relationship. Not only are dogs important to their people, people are important to their dogs as well – in many cases at least. Many dogs are in an almost constant state of awareness of their people, following them everywhere, eagerly awaiting the next cuddle, a game of fetch or the next walk. Taking Rollin's notion of sympathetic observations and empathic understanding seriously, such observations tell us something about dogs. They tell us something about what is important to dogs. Some may argue that it is the game of fetch, the walk or the cuddle that are important for the dogs, not the specific person(s). The importance of activities does not necessarily exclude the importance of specific persons, though. Interpretations of dog behavior varies depending on our view of dogs and of the epistemological underpinnings. Our epistemological underpinnings are in line with Rollin as we have argued earlier and the following should be read with that in mind.

The key question here is, however, whether a dog is such an other in front of whom we can feel ashamed of ourselves. Is a dog, with her gaze, able to disturb our very being as in the keyhole example? Of being an authority who can set standards and ideals that we wish to live up to? Of rejecting or ignoring us? And of disclosing a truth about ourselves that we do not wish the dog – or others – to know about? Of making us feel

inadequate? Are we afraid of showing them our perceived weaknesses? Do dogs pass judgments that can evoke all or some of these feelings in us? Last but not least does shame play any role at all in the relationship between people with PTSD and their dogs?

Dogs look at us. They pay attention to us and their gazes are not empty looks. They pass judgment, they can both reject us and ignore us and they can certainly make us feel inadequate. They do this in their species specific manners of course, but they do so nonetheless. Dogs have preferences, likes and dislikes, and they are able to express themselves in a way that is understandable to others, including humans. Dogs can look or even walk away from you as a response to you trying to approach him. He can growl, bark or even bite you as a response to your approach. He can avoid you all together or flee at the mere sight of you. These behaviors can easily be interpreted as passing judgments or as examples of ignoring and/or rejection and they can therefore create a negative feeling in the recipient[3]. A dog can easily be the one disturbing us in our pre-reflective consciousness as in the keyhole-example by making a sound. But, do these dog-behaviors elicit shame in us and if so which kind of shame?

Given our argument that moral shame is an important part of human life and that the ethical demand can easily be ascribed to the relationship between humans and other animals we ought to recognize that a specific kind of shame is actually an important part of the dog-human relationship. The sense of shame – the moral shame – can help us navigate the social and moral sphere of life that, among other things, includes our lives with nonhuman animals such as dogs. We have a responsibility for the dogs with whom we share our lives. We, as moral agents, can and should engage in a respectful relationship with a dog, being considerate to her needs and wants and thereby strive to provide an enriching satisfying life for her – living up to our own moral ideals that we share with others as well. If we find ourselves not living up to our (perceived) responsibilities

[3] We are aware that there may be a discrepancy in the interpretation of actions and behaviors and what those actions and behaviors are actually meant as. However, that is not of the greatest importance for our discussion here, which is why we will not go into a deeper discussion on that specific topic.

towards our dog, we may feel ashamed for being such a person who does not meet expected standards. The difficulty comes when we ask whether we feel ashamed before other people with whom we share our moral ideals or we feel ashamed before our dog. Do we wish to hide from those other people or do we wish to hide from our dog? We may feel a need to repair our (perceived) failures – for instance for having yelled loudly resulting in our dog cowering. This is, however, more similar to feeling guilty than to feeling ashamed. We may try to make amends and thereby create room for our dog to show us affection and happiness – or forgiveness, which gives us an immediate feeling of relief. In such a situation, we may still feel ashamed of ourselves. Of being such a person who yells at her dog. The feeling of wanting to hide, the blushing, the pounding heart and sweaty palms that comes with feeling shame, however, is most likely with other people in mind – even though they are not psychically present. That is representative of the reflective shame. It is from other people we feel the need to hide our (perceived) failures, weaknesses and inadequacies. Even though we can feel bad and perhaps even miserable for having failed our responsibilities towards our dog, it is doubtful that we feel ashamed of ourselves before our dog. Our dog may even be that related other from whom we seek consolation when our social relations with other people are difficult. They may be that social other from whom we experience unconditional love (see for instance Taylor et al. 2013, Krause-Parello & Morales 2018). In addition, a dog is someone to take care of (Ibid.) and such care taking facilitates the possibility of a directional awareness and focus that inhibits the self-centeredness that is also connected to shame. Having another's welfare in mind and constructing our lives partly in order to fulfill that other's needs and wants require us to focus on someone other than ourselves. In this way focus is removed, at least occasionally, from our negative thoughts and ourselves and enable our feeling of self-worth.

Similar arguments are useful when it comes to dogs passing judgments, rejecting and ignoring us as well as their gazes upon us. If we imagine that a dog is the disturbing other in the keyhole-example, she may be the immediate cause of disturbance. Her stepping on a stick may be the sound that brings us into our reflective consciousness where we become aware of our vulnerable being with others. However, it is most likely that we

will feel a certain kind of relief if we find out that the cause of the sound was a dog. A dog will probably think or feel nothing about our spying on others. Our relief when finding out that the disturbing other was a dog points to the notion that our shamefulness is still directed at human others who are able to pass judgments upon us and who reminds us of our vulnerability as a subject. The same seems true in the case of embarrassment. If we do something awkward like being clumsy and the only one present is our dog, we may just be glad that no other humans were present. Therefore, even though dogs do pass judgments, even though dogs can both reject us and ignore is, such actions cause different experiences than human judgments, rejections and ignoring. This is not to say that we do not experience negative dog-judgments, rejections and ignoring as unpleasant, but they have different qualitative characters than when the experience involves another human being. Human societal and cultural norms, standards and ideals such as having a (good) job, providing for oneself and one's family, having the energy to volunteer at the local shelter or kids club and the like are standards that dogs do not care about. They do not have such expectations on our behalf. Their expectations are centered on feeding, rubbing bellies, playing, going for walks, initiating, and accepting invitations to other fun activities that keep the dog happy. Activities such as cleaning up after the dog, keeping the dog clean and tending to his physical health is not something the dog expects us to do. That is, however, something we[4] have agreed upon as part of being a good and responsible dog owner/-guardian.

Another pressing question is whether a dog be the cause of shame. Sometimes we claim to be ashamed of someone with whom we have certain relations. This could be our children, our spouse or even our dogs. However, instead of actually being ashamed of somebody else it seems most plausible that the shame we feel still falls back on our self-understanding and ourselves. Thus, we may be ashamed of not living up to our own or others' standards and ideals of being a good (enough) dog owner and thereby believing that we have caused our dog to misbehave, e.g. jumping up on others, barking, chasing cars, even ignoring or growling at other

[4] The we here represent the we in many Western cultures where dogs in many cases are considered family members and where there are animal protection and welfare laws and in some countries such as Denmark even specific laws for dogs.

people. We may feel inadequate as dog owners and will view ourselves as being weak and as failing at being the person, we wish to be. Thus, the dog can be a part of our feeling ashamed. Adding to this is the notion of having a psychiatric service dog, struggling with PTSD (and possibly other mental health issues) and the shame closely connected to such a diagnosis. If one is already struggling with shame due to PTSD and possible co-morbidities, it is not desirable to add to that shame. Therefore, it is imperative that taking proper care of a dog – both taking individual values and societal values into consideration – is possible for that person. Otherwise, (s)he may end up feeling even more ashamed, adding to the struggle already negatively affecting her/his life.

Another important notion is that service dogs are often required to wear a vest in public in order to be able to join their owner in stores, at cafés and other places where regular dogs are not allowed. This vest and thus the dog becomes a visible marker of their owner's disability and can thus possibly function as a stigma, as a sign of some form of disorder. Following Goffman, a stigma is a brand that exposes something negative and unusual about the particular person (1990, 11-16). The stigmatized is measured against what is considered normal and thereby be of various kinds, physical deformities being common but also perceived negative personal character traits such as weak will, dishonesty, rigid beliefs etc. In the public, such character traits are often seen as connected to for example mental disorders, addiction, alcoholism, unemployment etc. (Ibid.: 14). PTSD is not a disability visually obvious to others, but in bringing a service dog with a vest out in public changes that picture. The risk of being stigmatized increases due to the service dog and perhaps especially due to lack of public knowledge of psychiatric service dogs. The most commonly known service dogs are the ones assisting persons with wheel chairs and guide dogs for blind people. This means that walking with a service dog when one is obviously not blind or in a wheel chair may cause negative reactions from others. This is an experience that has been documented among PTSD-diagnosed veterans and it sometimes causes the veterans to avoid having the dog wear the vest (Krause-Parello & Morales 2018). The potential negative outcome of not letting the dog wear the vest is not being allowed in stores and other public places actually necessary for the normal day-to-day life of the veterans.

Conclusion

Even though the relevance of shame is important in the dog-human relationship as such, it is of particular importance for the relationship between people struggling with PTSD (and likely other mental health issues) and their dogs. Struggling with such mental health issues is likely to be followed by a struggle with self-undermining shame. The structure of the dog-human relationship does in fact seem to be free of such negative and self-undermining shame. Shame is a social phenomenon and as dogs are a part of our social sphere of life we cannot say that shame does not exist at all in the relationship. However, the negative side of shame is directed towards other people and not dogs. On the other hand, the sense of shame that we have called the moral shame can be of great importance both in a negative and in a positive sense. It can be positive because a sense of shame, as it is connected to the ethical demand, is imperative for our way of navigating the social sphere of life, including our lives with dogs. This is because such a relationship is based on social understanding of one another, a continuous becoming-with and on an ethical demand that prescribes the human responsibility for part of the dog's life. Shame can be negative because we may not be able to live up to our own individual moral values in taking care of a dog. This can add to the negative self-undermining shame already present due to PTSD and possible co-morbidities. However, being ashamed of oneself is nonetheless directed towards other people and not towards dogs. Dogs are thus another other, a related other, with whom we can form close social bonds. These human-animal bonds can create a shame-free space if the relationship is one that is understood as positive by the person already struggling from, for example, PTSD and the connected shame, and if the person does in fact experience herself capable of caring properly for a dog.

We propose that further research be conducted on the significance of shame for the dog-human relationship. We furthermore strongly recommend that such research encompasses the dog as a relevant other in and of himself to a larger extent than has previously been the case. Such an inclusion of the dog within the research framework and focus would not

only further our understanding of the animal, but also simultaneously open up new comprehensions and interpretations of both the dog-human relationship itself and the human partner.

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